

GHISLAINE'S WORLD

A life on the front page

How did an Oxford bluestocking with a thing for Aran sweaters become one of the world's best connected and most glamorous women – only to find herself embroiled in a sordid scandal making headlines on both sides of the Atlantic? Keith Dovkants investigates

Cooped in her Manhattan townhouse, Ghislaine Maxwell sits out the storm. Buffeted by accusations and gossip, she has battened down and buttoned up. Outside, even those who think of her with affection – and they are many – continue to wonder about her role in an affair as bizarre and humiliating as it is possible to imagine. Jeffrey Epstein, the rich money manager who has been the focus of her life for the past 20 years, finds himself in an unceasing turmoil over his criminal conviction for a paedophile offence. Ghislaine has been accused of being his procress of young girls who were then paid by Epstein for sexual favours. Prince Andrew was photographed with one of them, and his links to Epstein and Ghislaine have proven embarrassing and awkward. On the New

Below, from left, Ghislaine Maxwell with Wendi Deng Murdoch; Mick Jagger; Jean Pigozzi; and Colin Firth



Ghislaine and her father, Robert, at an Oxford United football match in 1986



York social circuit, where Ghislaine had become a dazzling presence, the more cruel are saying that to have one man in her life become an object of public hatred is unfortunate – and that having it happen twice seems careless. This, of course, is a reference to her father, Robert Maxwell, the multimillionaire publisher and former Labour MP found dead in the sea off the Canary Islands in November 1991. It appeared he had fallen, jumped or been thrown from his yacht. We still don't know for sure. Soon afterwards, it emerged that he had stolen hundreds of millions of pounds from his companies' pension funds to try to avoid impending bankruptcy.

When Maxwell was vilified as a corporate thief, his family inevitably suffered – none more than Ghislaine. She is the youngest of Maxwell's seven surviving children, and her closeness to him was evidenced by the name he gave his cherished boat, *Lady Ghislaine*. Robert Maxwell

and Jeffrey Epstein are the defining influences in 49-year-old Ghislaine's life. Both, in their way, have been sources of torment. She couldn't help the fact that her father was a fraudster and she was never accused of being involved in his misdeeds. But *Tatler* has learned that Ghislaine's alleged role in Jeffrey Epstein's strange sex life is being investigated by lawyers in a new action that could yet see her drawn into the legal morass in which Epstein finds himself. And her long-standing friendship with Prince Andrew has come under terrific strain as he is dragged into the Epstein affair in a way that, as we shall see, he could hardly have imagined. Informed observers see the prince as a mere victim of collateral damage. But what of Ghislaine? Does she deserve to have her rather enviable life turned upside down? The answer to that question may lie in the true nature of the bond between her and 58-year-old Epstein. And no attempt to deconstruct

Below, from left, Ghislaine with Candace Bushnell; Rupert Murdoch; Simon 'The Box' Hammerstein, left, and Josh Lucas; and Allegra Hicks



that can be made without first examining Ghislaine's relationship with her father.

Robert Maxwell was a one-off. A good thing too, many might say. His daughter-in-law Pandora called him 'the fat crook'. Born into a poor Jewish family in pre-war Czechoslovakia as plain Ján Hoch, he joined the British Army during the Second World War, won the Military Cross and was commissioned as a captain. After the war, he settled in Britain, started a publishing company and became Labour MP for Buckingham North. He prospered in business, took over Mirror Group Newspapers and founded *The European*. He settled his family at Headington Hall, a grand house in Oxford, and, as his fortune and influence grew, so too did his capacity for being unbearable. Maxwell could be brilliant and charming but many, especially those who worked for him, found him an overbearing bully. So, on occasion, did his children.

Ghislaine's mother Elizabeth (always known as Betty) once said: 'Bob has only to look at me and I get pregnant!' She had nine children; two died tragically. Michael, the eldest was seriously injured in a car accident at the age of 15 and died, still in a coma, six years later. A daughter, Karine, died of leukaemia at the age of three. Philip, the eldest surviving child, is an academic who won a scholarship to Oxford at the age of 16. He was never interested in his father's business and now, aged 63, lives in London and is said to be writing a book. Anne, 62, became a teacher and, according to a recent report, now works as a hypnotist. Twins Isabel and Christine, 60, once featured in *The Sunday Times* Rich List, with a fortune of £100 million gained from their internet business. They lost heavily when the dotcom bubble burst, though Isabel still runs her business from New York. Christine is married to a scientist and lives in France. Kevin and Ian, in their early 50s, were the Maxwell children most involved in their father's business. They stood trial on charges of defrauding Mirror Group pensioners but were acquitted. Kevin was declared bankrupt with debts of £400 million and the two brothers still work together from an office in Mayfair. They are believed to have invested in property and a recent report said that Kevin was working on power-station deals in the Middle East. Betty Maxwell, who celebrated her 90th birthday in March, lives quietly in London. After her husband's death she took up academic studies. Born in France, she now uses her maiden name and is known as Dr Elizabeth Meynard.

Ghislaine, Robert Maxwell's favourite child, adored and feared her father. 'Riding crop or shoehorn?' he would ask when a spanking loomed. Philip, Kevin and Ian were all very bright and secured places at Oxford. The pressure on Ghislaine to do the same was enormous. A contemporary at Marlborough recalled that she crammed ferociously to meet her father's expectations. 'She struck me as being rather needy,' he said. Ghislaine read French and history at Balliol and, tearing between parties in Oxford and London in her VW Golf convertible, had a lot of fun. Her friends included Robert Hanson, Jamie Sainsbury, David Faber and Rupert Fairfax.

'She was naughty and funny at the same time,' Fairfax, a successful businessman, told *Tatler*. 'You couldn't help but like her. She was one of life's givers; if someone needed a hand, or if there was something to celebrate, she'd be the first one to get stuck in.' He recalled a visit to Headington Hall, where he met the rather frightening figure of Robert Maxwell. 'He boomed at me, "So which college are you at?" I said I wasn't at Oxford. He turned around and walked off without another word.'

Another contemporary remembered Ghislaine's 21st birthday at Headington: 'There were about 300 people and her father gave a speech after dinner which was rather embarrassingly fulsome about how wonderful Ghislaine was. Then he said he was tired, would join us for one dance and go to bed, but hoped we would have a good time. He went to bed but – about 10 minutes later – the music began to annoy him. Five minutes after that, he had the electrical supply to the sound system turned off. And that was that. Ghislaine was in tears. It was 11.30.'

Rupert Fairfax confesses to finding himself baffled by the allegations swirling around his friend of 30 years. 'I just don't recognise the person I know in the context of these accusations,' he said. 'Ghislaine is not a bad person. She is warm and funny and naughty. In all the time we have been friends I have never seen a trace of malice in her.' This view is echoed by her friend Cosima Pavoncelli, who told us: 'I'm really surprised to see her involved in allegations like these. She just isn't a bad person. The only thing wicked about Ghislaine is her sense of humour.'

Ghislaine was working for her father when he died, moving between jobs in his newspaper empire. She tried her hand at running a diary and later worked as a fashion director. She impressed many hard-bitten hacks with her enthusiasm and chutzpah, although one recalled that he was never allowed to forget that she was the boss's daughter. John

Below, from left, Ghislaine with Isabella Blow; Tamara Mellon; Count Gianfranco Cicogna; and Rupert Fairfax



Jackson, a senior journalist at Maxwell's *Daily Mirror*, says he saw Ghislaine shredding documents aboard her father's yacht shortly after his death. The Maxwells denied this, but Jackson has never retracted his version. Whatever her impulses were after Maxwell died, one thing cannot be disputed: Ghislaine was heartbroken. One friend described her as 'catatonic' with grief. Rupert Fairfax said: 'She worshipped him. He was not just her father, he was her hero. Then, as well as having to cope with losing him, she had to cope with everything people were saying about him.'

Maxwell's death came when Ghislaine was getting over the break-up of her four-year romance with Count Gianfranco Cicogna, a member of the Ciga hotels clan. The dashing and urbane Cicogna was credited by Ghislaine's friends with helping her shake off the frumpy image she had at Oxford. 'He told her what to wear, where to get her hair cut – everything,' said one.

With her father dead and Cicogna gone, Ghislaine turned up in New York, the town she was to conquer. She rented a one-bedroom flat on the Upper East Side and began to reinvent herself. She was far from destitute. Her father had bought her a pretty mewhouse in South Kensington which, in 1992, was valued at £500,000. She also had a trust fund that provided her with £80,000 a year, at that time more than the prime minister earned. And she was a knockout, with deadly charm and, perhaps most importantly, a bulging Filofax. In London, she had suffered for her father's crimes. One estimate of the money missing from his companies was £727 million. In New York she was a celebrity, with an address book full of the names of rich and famous friends. Robert Maxwell was a determined soldier, ruthless and, by his own admission, an unflinching killer. His daughter, in whose dark beauty the old tyrant can still be discerned, was not about to succumb to guilt by association. She hit the phone. Soon, she was being seen at all the smart parties. Men adored her. She talked dirty in a British boarding-school accent, peppering her Rabelaisian asides with an occasional four-letter word. She once brought dinner-party chatter to a standstill when she announced she was planning to remove all her body hair. Then, about a year after her father's death, she was photographed boarding Concorde at Heathrow, heading back to New York. There was outrage. Maxwell's retirees had just been told their pension payments were being stopped. How could the evil crook's daughter spend £2,000 on a plane ticket while that was happening? In fact, she



Far left, Ghislaine with Epstein at Sandringham. Left, with Prince Andrew and 17-year-old Virginia Roberts, Jeffrey Epstein's 'personal masseuse', in 2001. Above, Epstein's 51,000-square-foot townhouse in New York

didn't spend the money. Her ticket was bought by the soft-spoken grey-haired American who, unnoticed by the photographers, boarded the plane with her. This was Jeffrey Epstein, then a shadowy figure whose copious supply of money baffled everyone. What did he do? Some thought he was a bounty hunter, recovering vast sums owed to the very rich. Others said he was a property developer. Or a financier. The question has never been satisfactorily answered. To this day, no one really knows where Epstein gets his money. But there is an awful lot of it. He lives in what is believed to be Manhattan's largest private residence, a house once owned by the Macy family, spanning more than 50,000 square feet. He also has a 7,500-acre ranch in New Mexico, a 70-acre island in the US Virgin Islands and a house in Palm Beach, Florida, which is said to be worth around £3 million. He has a helicopter and an executive jet and he either owns or has access to a Boeing 727. He used the Boeing to fly ex-president Bill Clinton, actors Kevin Spacey and Chris Tucker and others to Africa to investigate AIDS and poverty. When Ghislaine met Epstein, he was in his late 30s and had just been named *Cosopolitan's* bachelor of the month. Given his money and screen-star looks, one can see why. But Epstein had something else Ghislaine found irresistible. He is frighteningly clever. He started out as a maths teacher at an exclusive private school and

Below, from left, Ghislaine with, from left, India Hicks, Sophie Dahl and Amy Sacco; Naomi Campbell, Donald Trump and Melania Knauss; and Tim Jefferies



impressed a pupil's father who then recruited him to a job on Wall Street. Epstein used his mathematical knowledge to develop complex formulae that could be applied to financial markets, especially in the area of currency exchange. He went on to form his own company and began advising Leslie Wexner, the billionaire creator of the Limited Brands group, which owns, among other extremely successful companies, Victoria's Secret and La Senza. Some on Wall Street believe that Wexner is the source of Epstein's fortune, although the version Epstein seems to prefer is that he advises a number of very rich clients. Intriguingly, he is said to have a permit to carry a gun. Epstein's talents are not restricted to mathematics. He plays the piano to concert standard (there is a nine-foot Steinway grand in his house) and he cultivates Nobel Prize-winning scientists with whom he engages in arcane conversation.

'Ghislaine was totally in thrall to him,' Rupert Fairfax said. 'The death of her father left a terrible gap in her life and Jeffrey filled it. I remember seeing them together in Aspen. Jeffrey was everything to her. He lifted her up at a time when she was very down.' Ghislaine's friends have asserted that she desperately wanted to marry Epstein, but that their romance turned into what one has described as 'an affectionate business relationship'. Epstein provided Ghislaine with a home, a beaux-arts townhouse on the Upper East Side close to his own residence. He also gave her the wherewithal to run it in a grand manner; she employed a substantial staff, including a full-time butler and maid who had their own quarters at the property. Ghislaine appeared effortlessly to establish herself as one of New York's leading socialites. Witness, for instance, the party she threw for Allegra Hicks, the designer ex-wife of Ashley Hicks, a grandson of Earl Mountbatten and second cousin of the Prince of Wales. The 80 guests at Ghislaine's house included Hollywood actor Matthew Modine, at least one Rockefeller, a Radziwill and numerous billionaires. After toasting the future of Allegra's new shop in New York with vintage Dom Pérignon, Ghislaine took her guests to the library, where the books had been given fake spines with titles naming her friends. The party, like many she hosted, was a triumph and her success gave the slightly gauche Epstein a social entrée that had thus far eluded him. She is credited with helping him forge a friendship with Bill Clinton, among other figures of influence.

But even Epstein could scarcely have imagined she would create an opportunity for friendship with a member of the British royal family – Prince Andrew, whom she appears to have met in London when he was

working at the Ministry of Defence. At the turn of the millennium, Ghislaine and Andrew were hardly ever apart, enjoying eight different jaunts together in the space of a year. In February 2000, they holidayed in Palm Beach. Then they travelled to New York for a fashion show. A month later, Andrew was back in New York at a fundraiser for the London Symphony Orchestra, again accompanied by Ghislaine. A few weeks after that, Andrew returned for another round of socialising with Ghislaine. The following month, they met up for another holiday in Florida. In the autumn, Andrew flew to New York, where he and Ghislaine were spotted together. Just before Christmas, Andrew gave a house party at Sandringham to mark Ghislaine's 39th birthday. A few weeks later, in January 2001, they were on holiday again, in Phuket. What was going on? Was it a romance? No, said informed sources. Because on at least five of the eight occasions when Andrew and

Ghislaine were together, Jeffrey Epstein was there as well. Andrew invited them both to Windsor for the Queen's birthday party. One of Epstein's friends, Nobel Prize-winning scientist Murray Gell-Mann, said he understood that Epstein had given the Queen financial advice.

After almost 10 years together, Ghislaine had become what Epstein characterised as his 'best friend'. He once denied that she was on his payroll, but *Tatler's* inquiries suggest that her financial interests lead directly back to Epstein. In 1995 a company called Ghislaine Corp was registered in Florida, with offices at Epstein's Palm Beach address. Whenever Ghislaine is asked what she

does, she says she is managing director of a company called New York Strategy Group. Not much is known about this company except that, according to records, it is in the business of investment counselling. That is Epstein's area of expertise and closer inspection shows that New York Strategy Group is just another part of his financial empire. So if Ghislaine really does work for Epstein, what does she do?

There is, in fact, a clue buried in the court documentation from Pennsylvania. In 2003 a writ was filed by Nelson Shanks, the celebrated portraitist whose sitters have included Pope John Paul II, Ronald Reagan and Diana, Princess of Wales. Shanks claimed that he had been hired to paint the clothing billionaire Leslie Wexner, his wife Abigail and their children. Yet when Shanks finished the picture, Wexner refused to pay for it, owing \$339,000. When Shanks sued for his money – successfully, as it turned out – he also named Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. It was Ghislaine, he said, who had approached him and arranged the deal with Wexner. Epstein was also involved, he said. It

Below, from left, Ghislaine with Imran Khan; Keith Richards; and Yasmin Le Bon



was a minor episode and it went almost unnoticed – but now, in the context of questions about what Ghislaine does and where Epstein gets his money from, it may offer an insight. According to Conchita Sarnoff, a producer and writer based in Washington who has known Ghislaine since the Nineties, the Shanks affair may be significant. 'It shows that Ghislaine acted as Wexner's agent,' Sarnoff told us. Even if she is not on Epstein's payroll, she has shown a willingness to help out Epstein's patron and mentor, Wexner.

Sarnoff added: 'I am saddened for Ghislaine. As a mother, as a woman. She saw a lot of things that maybe were not healthy. She started out with every opportunity to change the world for the better. Instead she has come to this. It's beyond sad.'

Epstein was convicted in 2008 of soliciting an underage girl for prostitution and served 13 months in jail. He is on America's sex offenders' register. During civil actions brought by young women who claimed they had also been Epstein's victims, lawyer Brad Edwards served a subpoena on Ghislaine, who was said to have recruited one of his clients to go to Epstein's Florida house. Edwards said he wanted to take evidence from Ghislaine but her lawyer said she had flown to England because her mother was dying and that she would not return to the United States. Two weeks after the case was settled out of court, Edwards said, he saw that Ghislaine was a guest at Chelsea Clinton's wedding in New York. That might have been the end of it, but events have now taken a strange turn. Epstein is suing Edwards over his role in the civil actions, and that case now threatens to embroil Ghislaine. Jack Scarola, the Florida lawyer acting for Edwards, said: 'Whether and to what extent Ms Maxwell assisted in procuring young girls for Jeffrey Epstein and her knowledge of and participation in their victimisation

are likely to be a focus of attention in the pending proceedings against Jeffrey Epstein.'

Scarola's defence of Edwards has already had consequences few could have foreseen. Epstein's address book was declared part of the evidence and a copy was duly appended to the court documents. This left Epstein's contacts, including Prince Andrew, in a situation where their personal telephone numbers, email addresses and other details were visible on the internet. One can only imagine the gnashing of royal teeth – and frantic changing of phone numbers – that involved. Although she has not been contacted by police or anyone involved in a criminal investigation, it has, of course, been highly embarrassing for Ghislaine.

So how is she taking it? Even old friends have been unable to persuade her to speak. She's hired a company that specialises in 'reputation management' and 'crisis communications'. Its spokesman told us that she had no comment, but she's been quoted as saying, 'The allegations against me are abhorrent and entirely untrue and I ask that they stop. A number of newspapers have shown a complete lack of accuracy in their reporting of this story and a failure to carry out the most elementary investigation or any real due diligence. I am now taking action to clear my name.' Since the Prince Andrew/Epstein story broke in late February, photographers who cover the Manhattan social circuit say they

haven't seen her. Yet few doubt that she will soon be back. Sarnoff remarked: 'New York society will forgive anything if you are wealthy or have access to money. As long as Ghislaine has it, she will be accepted.' Her old chum Kate Braine, the artist and jewellery designer, thought Ghislaine's resilience would see her through. She said: 'It's lucky her character is 100 per cent Tigger and 0 per cent Eeyore!' □



Below, from left, with Steve Wyatt; with her father, Robert Maxwell, and the Queen, 1983. Above, Ghislaine in Tatler, October 1997

